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Montana SCHOOLS

Winter 2000

Newsletter of the Montana Office of Public Instruction
Nancy Keenan, Superintendent
Vol. 43, No. 2

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Montana's educators work to develop a coordinated statewide assessment system

Tests and grades are an accepted part of our educational system. Students expect that teachers will ask them to demonstrate what they have learned. Parents expect their children to bring home report cards, so they can assess how well their children are doing in school.

But, say Montana education officials, assessment is about more than test scores and grades. It's about discovering what's working for Montana students and what needs to be improved.

Assessment should serve learning

In a proposed change to its administrative rules on state-level assessment, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) states that assessment's primary purpose is to serve learning.

Assessment is a tool that educators can use to evaluate the performance not only of Montana's students but of Montana's teachers, schools, and statewide system of education as well.

> **"Assessment is key to making Montana's good schools even better for Montana students. With a reliable, comprehensive, and coordinated means to review and evaluate our educational system, we can gain a better understanding of what's working for Montana students and where we need to improve."**
>
> **—Nancy Keenan**
> **State Superintendent**
> **of Public Instruction**

The ultimate goal of assessment should be to measure Montana's educational strengths and to identify ways to improve learning opportunities for Montana students.

This means different things at different levels of our education system. In the classroom, assessment impacts instruction and individual learning. At the state level, assessment affects learning by assisting policy decisions and assuring program quality for all students in Montana.

Assessment should be coordinated

In order to draw reliable conclusions and make informed decisions about instruction or policy, the data must be reliable, comparable, and consistent. Much depends on the criteria used for evaluation, how the data was collected, and how it was reported.

"We can tap into a lot of educational data," says State Superintendent of Public Instruction Nancy Keenan. "But," she adds, "knowing how that data compares with other sources of information and deciphering what it means for specific schools, classrooms, and students is a complicated process."

"The key," Keenan emphasizes, "is for Montana's communities, educators, and policy makers to use assessment to form a realistic and reliable picture of how teaching practices and school organization affect student achievement in our state."

Montana is devloping a statewide, coordinated, and comprehensive assessment system to make sure that students like these get the best education possible.

A single test for Montana's statewide assessment

As part of the Office of Public Instruction's (OPI) School Improvement Initiative, Montana has been working to develop and implement a coordinated system of assessment. A large step in that direction took place this past November.

Until recently, Montana's own statewide assessment practices have been somewhat disjointed. Accredited schools have been required to test all students in grades 4,8, and 11 in reading, mathematics, science, communication arts, and social studies, but the schools have locally selected the actual test from a list approved by the BPE.

In November, however, the BPE determined that all schools in Montana will use a single test to fulfil that requirement, starting with school year 2000-01. The decision to adopt a single, annual test will not only help coordinate statewide assessment efforts, it will also permit customized scoring, which will allow those elements unique to Montana's students and schools to be part of the assessment process.

(Continued on page 6)

Public hearings scheduled for administrative rules on state-level assessment

The Montana Board of Public Education will hold hearings in early March on proposed changes to its administrative rules on state-level assessment. The proposed rules address the purpose of assessment, requirements for testing, reporting of assessment results, and guidance on alternate assessment and accommodations. Copies of the proposed rule are available on the Office of Public Instruction's web page at <*www.metnet.state.mt.us*> under *Office of the Superintendent, Legal Services.*

The hearings will be held from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on:

March 3, 2000: ..... Missoula, Big Sky High School Library, 3100 South Avenue West

March 6, 2000: ..... Helena, Lewis & Clark Library, 120 South Last Chance Gulch, Large Conference Room

March 7, 2000: ..... Billings, Parmly Billings Library, 510 North Broadway, Broadway Room

People may submit comments either orally or in writing at the hearings. Written comments may also be submitted by mail to the Office of Public Instruction, PO Box 202501, Helena MT 59620-2501 or by e-mail to *opirules@state.mt.us*. They must be received no later than 5 p.m. on March 13, 2000. ■

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Message from Nancy Keenan

Making sense of all those national reports

National reports evaluating Montana's K-12 public school system have been coming at us at a dizzying speed. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, the American Federation of Teachers, *Education Week*, and the U.S. Department of Education have all released state-by-state comparisons on a range of topics, including student achievement, teacher quality, standards and accountability, school climate, and resources. Some of these reports focus on results and others focus on state policies and practices. Our state receives failing grades in some reports and high marks in others.

How do we make sense of these reports and use them to improve our understanding of Montana's K-12 education system? Through what lens should we examine ourselves when looking at standards and accountability, teacher quality, and student achievement?

Local versus state control of school curriculum

Our critics give Montana low marks for standards and accountability because of our emphasis on local rather than state control of the education curriculum. Our critics assert that state control over content and curriculum is necessary for accountability.

The State of Montana does not mandate curriculum in any subject areas, approve textbooks, nor direct the use of specific teaching models. Our Board of Public Education recently updated our content and performance standards. The standards set expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of grades 4 and 8 and at graduation. The standards set targets for student achievement and performance, but they do not specify how the targets will be achieved. Each school district controls its own curriculum and teaching methods.

Our critics argue that academic improvement requires the state to take a stronger role in determining what is taught and how. That is not the philosophy that Montana educators believe is in the best interest of our children.

Is Montana casting off its schools and teachers like ships at sea by not mandating curriculum? No, but it becomes our responsibility to our students to provide their teachers with the time, skills, and resources to do their jobs well. School systems and their teachers need to develop curriculum that is aligned to the state standards, to improve their classroom assessment tools to determine if students are moving toward the targets set for them, and to make use of statewide assessments to improve teaching and learning.

Teacher qualification and pay

When Montana has received low marks for teacher quality, the reports note that we have not made an effort to "expand the pool of talented teaching candidates by allowing well-educated candidates who have not attended schools of education to teach" (Fordham Foundation, 1999) nor have we provided financial incentives to attract and retain teachers. Our detractors tend to emphasize subject-matter expertise and devalue knowledge of teaching methods. In Montana, we have placed a strong emphasis on completion of a teacher education program as a prerequisite for teaching. In our public schools, 99.9 percent of our teachers have completed a teacher education program and are certified to teach. Many of our small schools need teachers who can teach in multiple areas. They need a foundation of knowing how to teach as well as focused study in several academic areas. Montana should be proud of its high level of certified public school teachers. In our teacher education programs, we need to emphasize both subject-matter expertise and improved teaching methods. Both are essential to better teaching practices.

Montana places 46th in the nation in terms of teacher pay. This fact has significant implications for our ability to attract and retain new teachers. We need to value teachers monetarily for the important work they do. Teaching is a profession, and pay rates must be raised across the board to attract and retain qualified individuals. As most Montanans will be quick to tell us, we need to be talking about increasing teacher pay in the context of economic development for all Montana. We know that onetime payments such as signing bonuses or financial incentives tied to student performance will not save our system if we cannot improve teacher salaries and professional support systems in the long run.

Montana can build on its successes

Montana receives high marks for student performance. In comparison with students in other states and countries, our students do well. Standardized tests given at the state, national, and international levels demonstrate this fact (NAEP, TIMSS, SAT, ACT).

We know that in Montana we have something that works. Smaller schools and high levels of parental involvement are great advantages that we give our students. We need to build on our successes, focusing on supporting local control through state support for additional professional development and improved salaries and benefits for our teachers. It won't be easy, but it will be worth the effort.

Nancy Keenan

Certification

Internships for counselors and principals

Teachers interested in becoming principals or school counselors should investigate the following internship programs Montana offers.

Principal Internships

Teachers participating in an administrative internship may assume a principal's duties while completing a master's program in school administration. To participate, a school district selects an eligible teacher, and local trustees agree to employ the intern as a principal at least half time, while the intern completes a planned and supervised program in school administration. The school district, intern, and university agree upon supervisory costs and support for the intern's professional development. To qualify, an intern must meet the college's criteria for entrance and complete any initial coursework the program requires.

Counseling Internships

The counseling internship program operates like the administrative program.

A school district enters into a cooperative agreement with the teacher-intern and the participating college program. The teacher agrees to work as a counseling intern and pursue an endorsement in K-12 guidance and counseling. The school district, intern, and university agree upon supervisory costs and support for the individual's professional development.

(Continued on page 12)

Christa McAuliffe Fellowship

OPI is now accepting applications

Montana teachers can now apply for a Christa McAuliffe Fellowship for the 2000-01 school year. The fellowship, approximately $28,000, may be used for a one-year sabbatical for study, research, or academic improvement.

Eligibility requirements

To qualify, applicants must be a full-time public or private K-12 school teacher, who has been employed as a teacher for eight or more years. Once finished with his or her fellowship, the recipient must also return to teach at his or her current place of employment for at least two years.

To apply

Teachers need to submit an application to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) that includes a proposal addressing one of the following educational priorities for Montana:

- ✔ Aligning curriculum and classroom assessments to state content standards;
- ✔ Using large-scale assessment data and other school, district, or state information to improve instructional programs;
- ✔ Using technology to enhance standards-based instruction, provide needs-driven professional development, and manage information; or
- ✔ Researching and developing program evaluation models that identify the effectiveness of needs-driven, research-based professional development that can assist in implementing the Montana School Improvement Initiative.

To be considered, completed applications must be postmarked no later than April 7, 2000.

Applications and information

To learn more about the application process or to request an application form, contact Carol Gneckow (tel: 444-2417; e-mail: *cgneckow@state.mt.us*) or Nancy Coopersmith (tel: 444-5541; e-mail: *ncoopersmith@state.mt.us*). ■

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Declining enrollment decreases schools' budget options

Over the past decade, local taxpayers have shouldered the rising costs associated with educating Montana's children. The current school fiscal year — 1999-2000 — marks a welcome change. For the first time since 1991, Montana schools received an increase in state aid that exceeds the overall increase in school district general fund spending.

Despite the increase in state aid, the financial picture of Montana's schools is not rosy. Since the state's school funding system is based largely on the number of students a school serves, decreasing enrollment has put many school districts in a financial bind.

"Across Montana, school boards will continue to face tough choices as declining enrollments drive spending levels down," said State Superintendent Nancy Keenan.

"Increases in state aid have eased the impact of declining enrollments, but the extra money per student isn't fully making up for the budget reductions that smaller enrollments mandate," Keenan said. "As a result, many districts will be forced to cut back on staff and programs in the upcoming school year."

State share and local property tax

From the 1998-99 school year to the 1999-2000 school year, school general fund budgets grew by $12.83 million or 1.9 percent. State support for school general fund budgets grew by $13.90 million over the same period.

In addition, the rate of property tax increases to support school general fund budgets has slowed. Property taxes to support school district general fund budgets increased by $6.58 million for the current school year. This increase compares to an average property tax increase of $15.7 million in each of the previous eight years. The state share of general fund budgets has risen from 62 percent in 1998-99 to 63 percent in the current year. The local share has fallen as a result.

Property taxes to support total school budgets, both operations and facilities, increased by $4.16 million statewide for the current year. While property taxes to support school general fund spending increased by $6.58 million, property taxes to support other areas of school budgets decreased by $2.42 million.

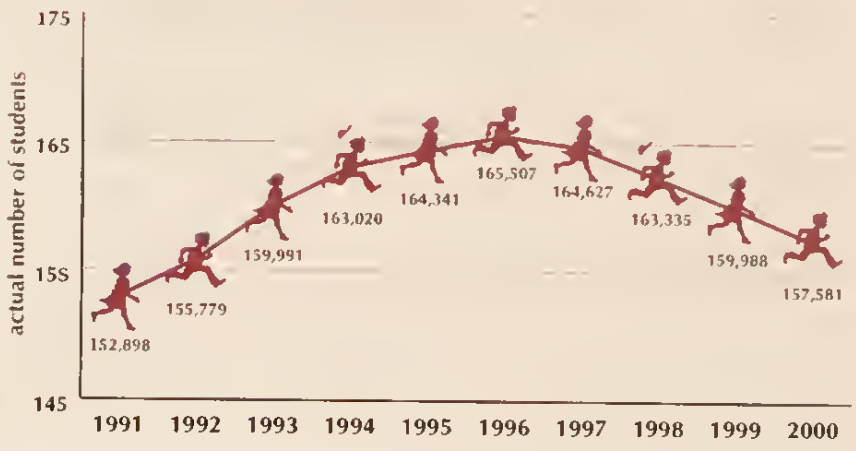
School enrollment decreases

Total school enrollment dropped 1.6 percent – or 2,407 students – between the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 school years. This decline in enrollment is widespread; indeed, nearly 60 percent of all Montana school districts experienced small enrollment decreases. Even those school districts that enrolled more students generally registered only small increases.

Montana's elementary enrollment, which includes students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, continued its downward trend with a decline of 2,031 students or 1.9 percent in the current school year. The pattern of declining enrollments has also now reached Montana's high schools, where enrollment in grades 9-12 has decreased for the first time in a decade.

High school enrollment peaked in 1998-99 at 50,538 students; enrollment for the current year is down by 376 students to 50,162. High school enrollments are projected to fall further in the coming years as the declining birth rates of the late 1980s and 1990s affect high school enrollments.

Montana School Enrollment 1991-2000



All indications suggest that pubic school enrollments will continue to decrease unless Montana sees a significant "in-migration" of families with school-age children in the next few years. Birth rates are on the decline in the state. For several years, incoming first-grade classes have had enrollments of about 1,000 fewer students than the outgoing eighth-grade classes.

Budget caps

In order to equalize education spending, Montana's school funding formula sets minimum and maximum general fund spending levels for all school districts. Allowable spending levels are largely predicated on the number of students a school serves. Since enrollments have fallen, the number of school districts approaching state-mandated budget caps has increased.

For the 1999-2000 school year, two-thirds of Montana's students in grades K-8 are enrolled in districts where spending levels have reached 95 percent of the maximum budget or higher. In the previous school year, just over half of Montana's elementary school students were enrolled in these districts. At the high school level, one-third of high school students are enrolled in districts where spending levels were 95 percent of the maximum budget or higher. This figure remained constant from the 1998-99 school year.

> **"Across Montana, school boards will continue to face tough choices as declining enrollments drive spending levels down. ... Many districts will be forced to cut back on staff and programs in the upcoming school year."**
>
> **—Nancy Keenan**
> **Montana State Superintendent**

The percentage of elementary students enrolled in districts spending at the minimum or BASE level dropped from 13 to 11 percent for the current school year. At the high school level, the percentage of students enrolled in districts spending at the minimum (BASE) level dropped from 17 to 9 percent.

School districts face tough choices

Declining enrollment and mandated budget caps leave schools little flexibility.

As school trustees turn to their districts' budgets for the 2001-02 school year, the great majority of school boards will be forced to make cuts, even with the per-pupil increases granted by the legislature.

After several years of absorbing declining enrollment and increasing costs of doing business, school districts have few "easy" cuts to make.

"We've made some progress this biennium in state support for schools," said State Superintendent Nancy Keenan. "But declining enrollments must not jeopardize the quality of our educational programs."

Keep education a priority

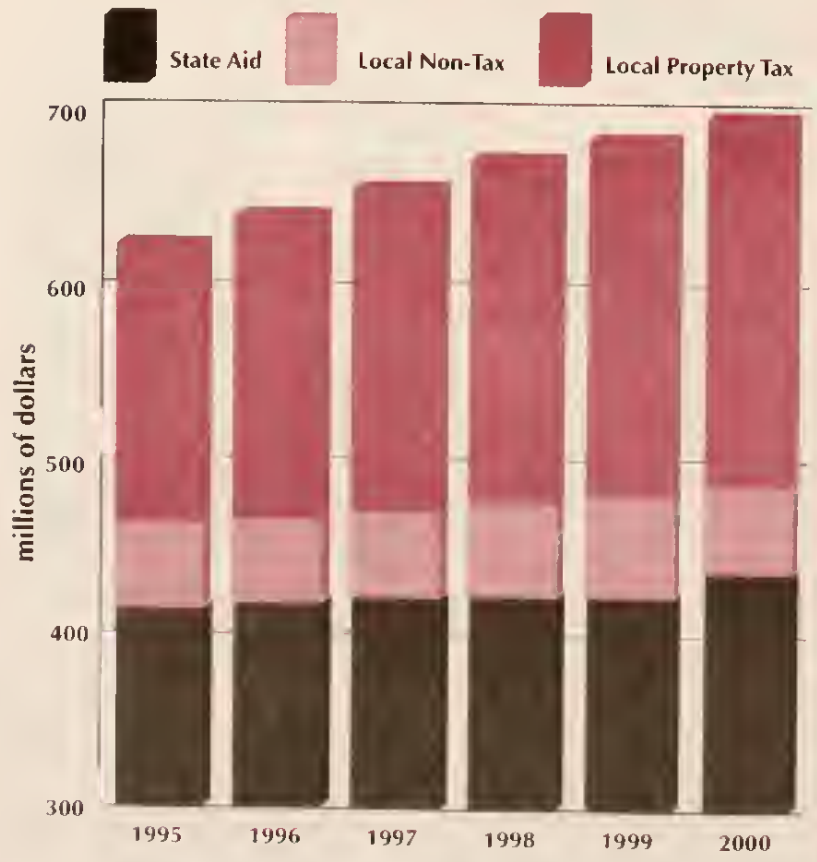
Continued support of Montana's schools and school children is crucial to maintaining the quality of Montana's schools, State Superintendent Keenan emphasizes.

"Education is the key to our economic and social progress. Support for our educational systems must be a top priority for our state," states Keenan.

"We must provide our children with the educational opportunities and skills they need to be productive citizens in our society." ■

— Madalyn Quinlan, OPI Chief of Staff

State and Local Contributions to Montana School Budgets, 1995-2000



Funding Source	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
	— in millions of dollars —					
State Aid	413.467	416.866	420.632	421.916	421.830	435.733
Local Non-Tax: Fund Balance	15.985	11.88	10.9685	10.425	10.323	7.232
Local Non-Tax: Non-Levy Revenue	32.545	35.545	37.8146	43.292	47.372	42.603
Local Property Taxes	158.426	172.385	183.986	193.992	201.099	207.681

Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Professional Development Guidelines

In July 1999 the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) sponsored an Educator's Forum on Professional Development and invited the Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) to present its recommendations for innovative professional development activities.

In response, MCTM members prepared a document containing their professional development guidelines, which MCTM President Fred Longhart presented at the forum.

According to Longhart, "The guidelines were adapted from the professional development guidelines of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and from the experiences MCTM has gained through its professional development activities."

The document, itself, consists of three parts. The first consists of the MCTM Recommendations for a Professional Development Model for Montana. The second outlines the NCTM Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics. The third summarizes a NCTM article from 1994, *Ten Key Principles from Research for the Professional Development of Mathematics Teachers.*

The first portion of the MCTM Guidelines is reproduced on the right. The second and third portions will appear in the next two issues of *Montana Schools.* ■

MCTM Recommendations for the Professional Development of Mathematics Teachers in Montana

All teachers must have access to high quality professional development activities. These activities should include, but not be restricted to:

- long-term and ongoing activities held regionally and at the school level;
- Participation at the Fall MEA/AFT Conference;
- participation at other state, regional and national conferences, institutes, and classes;
- participation in innovative and effective distance learning courses.

All professional development activities should be content driven, and should model exemplary pedagogy. Some activities should include information on learning styles and research findings.

Time must be built into teachers' schedules so that these activities will be considered an integral and important part of a teacher's job. Time can be built in both throughout the school year in two to three hour blocks, and by designating more days as professional development days. Teachers should be compensated for their involvement in professional development.

All new and early career (0-2 years experience) teachers should have an experienced teacher to mentor them, and help them grow as professionals. Both the new/early career and the mentor teacher should have time built into their schedules to work together.

All teachers should have the opportunity to become a teacher leader, and become involved in professional development activities at the local, regional, state and national level. There must be mechanisms to identify and support the development of these Teacher Leaders. The Annual MCTM Leadership Conference is one such mechanism.

Some of the Professional Development activities should be regional in nature so that all schools and districts, large and small, can have access to high quality activities. Because of the large number of small and rural schools, strictly school-based professional development activities is not the best choice for Montana. Additionally, some professional development activities need to take place at the state and national level.

Teachers should be actively involved in planning and directing all professional development activities.

A strong group of teacher leaders, including those involved at the local, regional, state, and national level, is necessary for the professional development activities to be successful. The leaders must be willing to invest additional time to their growth as a professional.

Promoting a professional culture by encouraging teachers to be members of their professional organizations at both the state and national level is essential.

Communication and collaboration between districts, regions, professional organizations, OPI, BPE is important so that all teachers are informed, and information is shared.

Assessing the success of any professional development activity is a complex issue because so many factors are involved in increasing student achievement. Many different factors and measures should be used, and time should be built in so schools can study themselves, identify strengths, weaknesses, successes, and areas that need improvement. Some of the possible assessments include, but aren't limited to:

- number of students enrolled in mathematics;
- number of students enrolled in college preparatory mathematics courses;
- long-term tracking of SAT, ACT, TAP and other standardized test scores;
- number of teacher leaders;
- turnover rate of teachers;
- education level of teachers;
- support of administration in professional development activities,
- teacher surveys and evaluations. ■

What is MCTM?

The Montana Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM) has approximately 500 members, most of whom teach mathematics in Montana schools. MCTM wrote and received the SIMMS Grant funded by the National Science Foundation, bringing at least $15 million into Montana since 1993.

In conjunction with the SIMMS grant, MCTM has developed three different weeklong, professional development workshops and written numerous other grants to inservice teachers from the elementary level through the high school level. Starting in June 2000, MCTM has established an annual Professional Development Academy. During the first year, it will consist of three different workshops designed to meet the needs of elementary school teachers and middle and high school mathematics teachers. ■

Florence-Carlton Elementary integrates technology into the curriculum

Although computer technology has evolved from a curiosity to what the U.S. Secretary of Education calls "the new basic of American education," many elementary schools still use computers primarily as typewriters with Internet access. Instead, this "new basic" should be integrated with the elementary curriculum.

on current classroom activities. Each training session introduces and explores new technology skills and reinforces previously learned technology skills, while focusing on a classroom theme. The school's curriculum design and the presence of a full-time technology trainer, who works in coordination with the classroom teacher, makes this approach possible.

Technology helps create an enthusiastic learning environment at Florence-Carlton Elementary School.

Integrated technology

The successful integration of technology into the elementary curriculum requires two equally important actions. First, an integrated curriculum must be developed as a road map. Then, local school districts must fully implement and support this integrated curriculum.

In October 1998, the Florence-Carlton Elementary School (FCS) technology curriculum committee developed and implemented a technology-integrated curriculum. Over 440 elementary students receive formal, scheduled training each week that builds on technology skills that students have already learned while focusing

How it works

At FCS, simply teaching computer technology skills is not enough; rather, students learn how to apply their computer skills to specific work to reach a specific goal.

For example, students in grade 4 are studying U.S. states in the classroom. In their weekly training session, students learn to search the Internet for information about their state. They learn to copy and paste Internet information and save pictures. Students then use that information to create

(Continued on page 12)

STOP *the Violence* – fueled by the student's voice

"... A hard life is all that I know, but if we poison our children with hatred, then a hard life is all that they will know..."

As I listen to folksinger Nanci Griffith sing the song *It's A Hard Life Wherever You Go,* I find my mind wandering back to three training sessions held this fall in Glendive, Missoula, and Great Falls. The sessions targeted youth violence and taught Montana students and teachers how to recognize, report, and reduce violence in our schools and communities.

STOP in Montana

Montana was one of 11 states chosen to participate in the pilot program *STOP the Violence: Students Taking On Prevention.* This program is sponsored by the Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, Inc. (FCCLA) and the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

> **"Adults can coach, support, and advise, but it is ultimately students themselves who will show us how to end violence in their own school communities."**
>
> **—Alan Rains, Family Career and Community Leaders of America, Executive Director**

Due to its self-motivated means of addressing issues in the three important arenas of family, work, and daily society, FCCLA has proven to be an ideal vehicle for programs of this nature. In Montana, positive responses indicate that the STOP *the Violence* program will be no exception.

In October and November, over 50 schools — each represented by two to three students and a Family and Consumer Science teacher — participated in one of the three training sessions mentioned above. The energy level and commitment that the students and teachers brought to the trainings were most impressive. The liveliness of the participants is the key to the success of this program, which hopes to expand throughout the nation next year.

Student action key to STOP the Violence

At each training, the general consensus seemed to be that violence surrounds us. In fact, participants realized violence has become such a part of daily living that many found it difficult to define. It's no surprise, then, that participants repeatedly asked: If our children are continually inundated by violence — so much so that they don't even realize it surrounds them — how will we end this cycle of violent behavior?

Everyone seemed to agree on one answer: Action needs to be taken *at the student level.* Students will listen to their peers more willingly than to an adult.

When this program was created it realized the importance of peer education. Alan Rains, Executive Director of FCCLA, states, "Adults can coach, support, and advise, but it is ultimately students themselves who will show us how to end violence in their own school communities."

The fall training sessions hoped to initiate the *STOP the Violence* campaign by: teaching students how to recognize warning signs for violent situations and become familiar with a continuum of violent behaviors; discussing tolerance and mediation programs in schools; allowing students to collaborate and discover new resources, opening the door to discussion on numerous topics dealing with today's violent nature, and promoting the need for young people to report troubling behavior.

Students participate in a group activity during a STOP the Violence training this fall.

After attending a training session, students committed to set up programs and projects that focus on the important violence prevention issues found within their own communities and schools.

Let's change the future

The *STOP the Violence* project is a tool that communities can use to create programs that meet their specific needs. We are fortunate to be riding on the spirit, enthusiasm, energy, and power of today's youth.

I believe that if we would take the time to listen to our teenagers and give them the same respect that we demand from them, we could change the lyrics from Nanci Griffth's song from "it's a hard life, a hard life, a very hard life" to "it's a beautiful life, and let's live it to the fullest." ■

— Jill Hamilton, STOP the Violence State Coordinator

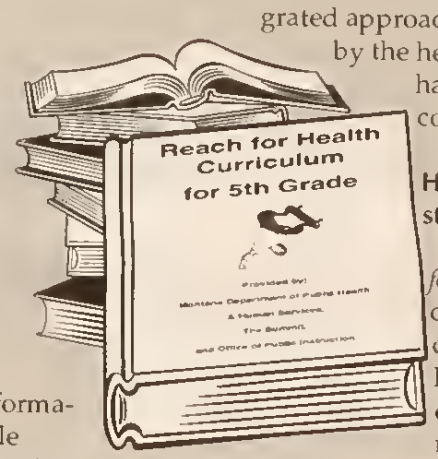
For more information on STOP the Violence project in Montana, call or e-mail either Jill Hamilton, state coordinator (tel: 587-2505; e-mail: hamilton@primemedia.net) or Laurie Stelter, state advisor (tel: 444-2059; e-mail: lstelter@state.mt.us).

Reach for Health
Curriculum guides are now available

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) have recently sent two curriculum guides — one designed for grade 2 and one for grade 5 — to each elementary school principal or supervising teacher in Montana.

Help for schools

Developed to help schools meet the newly adopted health enhancement standards, the guides include lessons focussed on: nutrition, physical activity, safety, disease prevention, and personal health.



The guides feature information for teachers, possible handouts and worksheets for students, assessment information, and ways to integrate lessons into other content areas.

Help for teachers

Reach for Health provides teachers with a useful tool. It is user-friendly, developmentally appropriate to grades 2 and 5, and based on active-learning methodology.

Finally, the curriculum's integrated approach to "health" and "physical education" will help teachers achieve the integrated approach required by the health enhancement concept.

Help for students

The *Reach for Health* curriculum is designed to help students take responsibility for their own well-being. Developed over a two-year period by the Summit Wellness Center in Kalispell through a grant from the DPHHS, it was pilot-tested in several Kalispell-area schools. ■

Children's Health Insurance Plan

In Montana, at least 27,000 children have no health insurance coverage. The majority live in families where the breadwinners work hard, pay taxes, and play by the rules. But they don't get health coverage on the job, and they can't afford to pay for it out of pocket. Through the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP), we have a chance to insure 10,000 of these children.

About the CHIP program

CHIP purchases private health insurance coverage for children from families with limited incomes (under 150 percent of poverty or $20,820 for a family of three). Depending on income, a $15 enrollment fee may apply, as may copayments for some services. Children must be under the age of 19 and uninsured for the past three months. No pre-existing condition limitations apply.

In Montana, the DPHHS administers the CHIP program. It is supported in fiscal year 2000 by $11.74 million in federal money and $2.56 million in state tobacco settlement money.

Help spread the word

Schools have served as one of the most successful avenues to reach eligible families in other states. We hope to repeat that experience in Montana.

As a result, educators are asked to please help inform Montana families about the CHIP program.

For more information

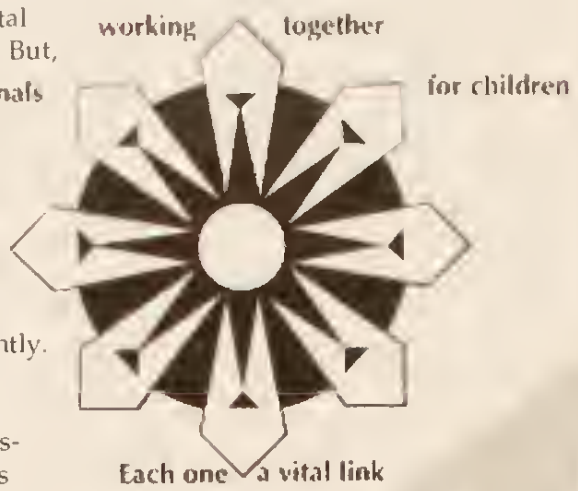
If you have any questions about CHIP, call Mary Dalton (444-4144) or Mary Noel (444-6992) or visit the CHIP web site at *<http://www.dphhs.state.mt.us/hpsd/medicaid/Chip.htm>*.

To receive a CHIP application, call 800-421-6667 or 444-6971. ■

Support available for special education paraprofessionals and their administrators

Over the past decade, the number of paraprofessionals providing services to students with disabilities nearly doubled nationwide, and Montana mirrors that trend.

Paraprofessionals are a vital resource for school districts. But, burgeoning needs for individualized services for students with disabilities and complex staffing patterns require administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals to work differently and more efficiently.



Resource guide available

Assisted by the Paraprofessional Task force — which is comprised of Montana paraprofessionals, parents, teachers, and administrators in both general and special education — and the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) developed and published *A Resource Guide for Administrators, Educators, and Paraprofessionals* in June 1999.

The *Resource Guide* offers assistance to school districts and individuals working as paraprofessionals. It is designed to help educators and administrators improve the effectiveness of paraprofessionals in the school setting. It is also addressed to paraprofessionals, outlining the work performance that is expected of them.

Further, the *Resource Guide* both presents a rationale for the use of paraprofessionals and describes the relationships and roles of school personnel as they work together in a team with paraprofessionals to ensure the most desirable results for students.

Finally, the *Resource Guide* provides suggestions for the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals, as well as an array of continuous and comprehensive training experiences.

For more information

To learn more about the *Resource Guide* and training that is available for paraprofessionals and their administrators, contact Susan Bailey-Anderson (tel: 444-2064; e-mail: *sbauderson@state.mt.us*) or Debbie Sebens (tel: 444-0037; e-mail: *dsebens@state.mt.us*). They can also help you if you would like a copy of the *Resource Guide*. ■

STEP Project offers support for beginning teachers

The STEP Project, a statewide project housed at MSU–Bozeman, provides beginning teachers with a range of support services. All beginning teachers in Montana are eligible to apply if they will be teaching elementary school or middle or high school mathematics or science. Beginning teachers are considered those with one to four years of classroom experience. Participants receive:

- ✔ A mentor teacher to work closely with throughout the year. STEP mentor teachers are available throughout the state and are selected to match the beginning teacher's grade level and subject area.
- ✔ A network of about 200 other early career teachers and mentors.
- ✔ A "survival kit" valued at $200 containing books, software, and other resources matched to their teaching assignment.
- ✔ Travel to one to two weekend workshops designed especially for beginning teachers.

To learn more about signing yourself or another early career teacher up for the STEP early Career Support Program, contact Elisabeth Swanson or Micki MacGregor (tel: 800-455-7837; e-mail: *STEP@math.montana.edu*). ■

Statewide assessment

Continued from page 1

A statewide, coordinated, comprehensive assessment system

The BPE's move to a single test represents an important piece in the plan to develop a coordinated, comprehensive assessment system. The system will ultimately include classroom, district, state, and national assessments.

The primary component of the system will be aligned classroom assessment, with all of the system's components reflecting the expectations for students that the content standards identify. In addition, the state-level component is expected to provide broad information to inform policy and program decisions, and to coordinate with and support local instructional efforts.

"Assessment is key to making Montana's good schools even better for Montana students," said State Superintendent Keenan. "With a reliable, comprehensive, and coordinated means to review and evaluate all pieces of our educational system, we can gain a better understanding of what's working for Montana students and where we need to improve. Educators, communities, parents — and most importantly — students will reap the benefits." ■

History comes alive for Montana students and teachers

Hands-on Montana History Camp at Virginia and Nevada cities

The Montana Historical Society (MHS) is happy to announce that they will offer three exciting sessions of History Camp during the summer of 2000, two for *students* and one for *teachers*.

Student Camp
June 18-24 and June 25 - July 1

The second annual History Camp will offer Montana seventh and eighth-graders new and exciting opportunities to learn about life in an 1860s mining town. This year History Camp has expanded, and students may choose from one of two weeklong camps. Campers will participate in hands-on educational and fun activities, including a trial of the 1930 Harrison Bank robbers, building preservation, gold panning, 19th century cooking, a cemetery tour, blacksmithing, and more.

Registration includes: six nights lodging in a historic building in Virginia City; six breakfasts, five lunches, five dinners, and the ice cream social; all activities and supplies; and one ticket to a performance at the Virginia City Opera House.

Scholarships are available, call for information. The MHS encourages local communities to raise funds for scholarships for local campers.

Teacher Camp
July 9-12, 2000

The first annual History Camp for Educators will offer Montana teachers of grades 7-12 the chance to get elbow deep in history and learn about life in an 1860s mining town. "Teacher Camp" grew out of MHS's highly successful student camp as an opportunity for educators to get together, have fun, and acquire new Montana history curricula. Campers will participate in hands-on educational activities, including how to teach primary sources through the trial of the 1930 Harrison Bank robbers, the Chinese in Montana, gold panning, a cemetery tour, and more. Renewal credit will be offered through the Office of Public Instruction.

Registration includes: three nights lodging in a historic building in Virginia City; three breakfasts, three lunches, and two dinners; all activities and supplies; and one ticket to a performance at the Brewery Follies.

A little more information

Instructors for all camps include staff from the MHS, the Montana Heritage Commission, Helena Middle School, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Transportation, and the Virginia City Preservation Alliance.

For more information call the MHS (444-4794). ■

— **Christine Gallas, MHS Education Officer**

Montana Ancient Teachers: Archaeology Education Workshop

The Montana Historical Society (MHS) will host a workshop on Friday, April 14, from 9 to 3:30 p.m. in Helena.

The workshop will introduce teachers to MHS's revised *Montana Ancient Teachings* curriculum for grades 4-8 along with other resources for teaching archaeology in the classroom.

Credit and scholarships available

Renewal credit is available. Registration for the workshop is $15, which includes lunch, materials, and the option of attending a field trip on Sunday morning in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Montana Archaeological Society (MAS).

The MAS is offering reimbursement scholarships to the first 15 teachers who register and attend the workshop.

To learn more

For information and registration materials contact Mark Baumler, State Historic Preservation Office, MHS, PO Box 201202, Helena MT 59620-1202 (tel: 444-7717; e-mail: mbaumler@state.mt.us). ■

February features reading in Montana

Although February is the shortest month, it is packed full of notable days. Groundhog Day starts it off, Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day follow, and — every four years — Leap Day rounds off the calendar.

Montanans, however, do not confine their festivities to just these four days. February is also *"I Love to Read!* month in Montana, and each day is cause for celebration and fun activities featuring books and reading dedicated to helping students develop as enthusiastic and able readers.

Reading can make a difference

Reading is an important skill. Helping children to improve their reading ability and to develop a love for books plays an important role in their success as students. Consider the following findings from the 1999 Reading Assessment given to students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and conducted by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).

- ✔ Students who reported reading 11 or more pages each day for school and homework had the highest average NAEP scores.
- ✔ Students who reported talking with family or friends about their reading activities once or twice a week had higher average reading scores than students who reported doing it rarely or never.
- ✔ Students who reported watching three or fewer hours of television each day had higher average reading scores than those students who watched more television.

Effective school reading programs

In the December 1999 issue of *Reading Today*, the International Reading Association reports that effective school reading programs all seek to help students develop as enthusiastic and able readers. Among the common characteristics demonstrated by identified effective schools are:

- ✔ A schoolwide emphasis on reading and literacy;
- ✔ A strong administrative support for reading;
- ✔ Parent and often community involvement;
- ✔ An emphasis on having students read for fun and practical purposes;
- ✔ A balanced approach to literacy instruction;
- ✔ A good supply of books available for students to read for pleasure;
- ✔ Programs to help struggling readers; and
- ✔ An expectation of success for all students. ■

Some ideas to promote student reading

The following list contains ideas for schools, teachers, and others to organize activities for students that focus on reading. *"I Love to Read!"* month is a good reason to organize them, but students will enjoy them any month of the year.

Read aloud — Read aloud to the class everyday—no matter how old the students are! Read students brief but complete stories as often as possible. Provide variety such as high interest, humor, special interest, family stories. Be a model. Let students see you read.

Read for a Capitol Gain— Hold a read-a-thon and donate the money collected to the State Capitol Restoration project.

Food fest — Plan a "food fest" for the classroom. Each student shares a poem, which uses food as a theme.

Read along— Celebrate with song by holding a read-along, sing-along. Use an overhead to project the words of old favorites and new songs. Students can assist in the preparation by illustrating the transparencies.

Kids' room library — Develop a "Kid's Room Library," made, run, and maintained by students.

Name a room — For one day, name each room at school after a book character or fantasy location.

Hold a book carnival — Have students invent carnival-like games for a student book carnival. Students should base their games on a book they have read during the school year either independently or as a class. A few days before the carnival give students the chance to show their games to classmates, try playing the games, and work out any kinks. On the day of the carnival, other classes, parents and administrators can be invited to try their luck with the games and join in the fun.

Celebrate Presidents's Day — Have students create a newspaper for the Inauguration Day of a president they are studying. Familiarize students with all parts of a newspaper and assign students to be in charge of different sections. All articles in each newspaper should coincide with the date on the newspaper.

Hold a February birthday party — Have students choose a famous person born in February whom they want to read about. At the birthday party students can share some information about their person. Some people born in February include: *Elizabeth Blackwell (2/3); Felix Mendelssohn (2/3); Charles Lindbergh (2/4); George "Babe" Ruth (2/6); Charles Dickens (2/7); Laura Ingalls Wilder (2/7); Jules Verne (2/8); Alice Walker (2/9); Daniel Boone (2/11); Thomas Edison (2/11); Abe Lincoln (2/12); Charles Darwin (2/12); Susan B. Anthony (1/15); U.S. Grant (2/16); Montgomery Ward (2/17); Nicolaus Copernicus (2/19); Erma Bombeck (2/21); George Washington (2/22); Fredrick Chopin (2/22); Wilhelm Grimm (2/24); William Cody (2/26); and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (2/27).* ■

*Please share the ways you celebrate "*I Love To Read!" *month. Send your ideas to June Atkins, OPI, PO Box 202501, Helena, MT 59620-2501 (tel: 444-3664; e-mail: jatkins@state.mt.us).*

Throw a reading party to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2nd

Read with children and join the rest of the nation in celebrating Dr. Suess's birthday. The goal is for every child in every school in every community to be in the company of a book the evening of March 2. The following list contains a few ideas to help organize a "bookish" birthday party in your community.

- ✔ *Hold workplace readings* — For instance, television news anchors might read to children on the news set, or judges might read to youngsters in their chambers.
- ✔ *Sponsor mall reading* — Set up a reading booth in your local mall on March 2.
- ✔ *Read in hospitals* — Recruit students to read with young patients.
- ✔ *Hold bookstore bashes* — Sponsor celebrations in local bookstores or other retail stores that sell books.
- ✔ *Get the local governing body involved* — Ask the city or county commission to issue an official Read Across America resolution or proclamation.

For further information visit the Read Across America Web site <*http://www.nea.org/readacross*> or write to: Read Across America, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202-833-4000 or <*http://www.reading.org*>. ■

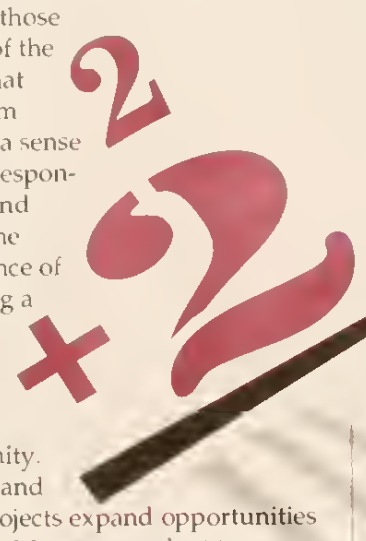
Dispatches

"Dispatches" are updates by Office of Public Instruction staff. Staff memhers may be reached at the phone numbers and e-mail addresses listed or by writing them at the Office of Puhlic Instruction, P.O. Box 202S01, Helena, MT 59620-2501.

Learn and Serve Montana
June Atkins, Director
444-3664
jatkins@state.mt.us

Service learning

Learn and Serve Montana, a K-12 school-based program, connects academic learning and service Through service-learning students develop those "habits of the heart" that help them develop a sense of civic responsibility and realize the importance of becoming a contributing member of their community.

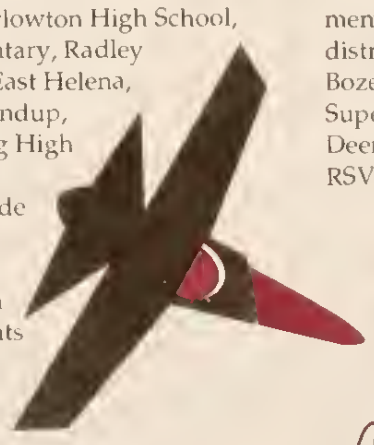


Learn and Serve projects expand opportunities for every Montana student to participate in structured community service projects that meet real community needs and are connected to the academic curriculum.

Learn and Serve mini-grants

Each year, the Learn and Serve Montana program offers a number of mini-grants to provide "seed money" to implement, operate, or expand K-12, school-based service-learning projects.

The schools that recieved 1999-2000 mini-grant awards were Glasgow, Harlowton High School, Ophir Elementary, Radley Elementary–East Helena, Cascade, Roundup, and Browning High School. Their projects include developing a walking tour, assisting high school students to develop curriculum and teach elementary students about drug abuse and prevention, and building a greenhouse to grow flowers and vegetables for economically disadvantaged community residents.



President's Student Service Scholarships

Each high school may select one junior or senior to receive a $1,000 scholarship for outstanding service to the community. The Corporation for National Service provides $500 for each scholarship matched with $500 from the student's community. Recipients must have served at least 100 hours within a 12-month period. Scholarship recipients also receive the President's Student Service Award gold pin, a presidential certificate, and a letter from the president.

President's Student Service Awards

The President's Student Service Awards recognize any young person from the age of 5 to 25 who completes 50 to 100 hours of community service over a 12-month period. Students may be certified by schools, colleges, or community organizations and will receive a specially designed gold pin with the presidential seal, a presidential certificate, and a letter from the president. Youth ages 5 to 14 who perform 50 hours of community service within a 12-month period may receive a silver pin with the presidential seal, as well as a presidential certificate and a letter from the president.

Montana America Reads
June Atkins, Director
444-3664
jatkins@state.mt.us

Montana America Reads program

The Montana America Reads program continues into the 1999-2000 school year. The America Reads Initiative challenges all Americans to make sure that all children can read well and independently when they complete third grade. Meeting the challenge requires recruiting volunteers from all walks of life who, once trained, can work closely with teachers and schools to enhance children's learning.

Program personnel in Montana

While I direct the program, the America Reads State Office is staffed by Sam Mahlum, AmeriCorps* VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) member and Karen Elliott, AmeriCorps*VISTA leader. Other AmeriCorps*VISTA members are hosted by school districts located in Billings, Butte, Bozeman, Belgrade, Missoula, Superior, Polson, Winnett, Lame Deer, Hardin, Pryor and by RSVP projects at Roundup and Miles City

Collaborating with the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), these members assist host schools and communities in the following activities:

- ✔ create and develop reading tutoring programs,
- ✔ build community and business partnerships,
- ✔ recruit and schedule volunteers,
- ✔ raise funds, and
- ✔ provide outreach to surrounding communities.

Tutoring and training

During the 1998-1999 school year, over 1,200 Montana students were tutored in reading and 635 tutors and trainer of trainers received training. Local reading council members are available to help train community members, students, and other as reading volunteers.

For further information about the Montana America Reads tutoring program, call me, Sam Mahlum (444-0256), Karen Elliott (728-2400 x 1057), or Joan Franke (444-9864).

Montanan elected IRA president

Dr. Carol Santa, Kalispell District Language Arts Coordinator, was elected president of the International Reading Association. Carol will preside over the International Reading Conference to be held in Indianapolis, IN, from April 30-May 5, 2000.

Curriculum and Assessment
Jan Clinard, Ed.D., Specialist
444-3714
jclinard@state.mt.us

MISTA Professional Development Series Offered Again

Since October of 1995, MISTA (Montana Improving Schools through Accreditation) has presented a total of 19 workshops at five different sites in Montana. Over 70 schools statewide have participated in two series of workshops, begun in alternating years. A new series of workshops will begin with "Workshop One" January 31 and February 1, 2000, in Bozeman; February 2-3 in Wolf Point; and February 22-23 in Great Falls. Workshop One focuses on Direction Setting (Beliefs, Mission, and Goals) and Profiling (Needs Assessments for Data-based Decision-Making).

Schools that begin the series of MISTA workshops are expected to continue with Workshop Two, *Desired Learner Results and Analysis of Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness*, in October of 2000 at the same sites; and Workshop Three, *School Improvement Planning*, in March of 2001.

Workshop participation

Letters of invitation were sent to administrators in the counties surrounding these sites. Districts that did not receive invitations may participate if space is available. Registration for one workshop is $20 per participant and covers continental breakfasts, lunch, and materials. Call or e-mail me for a registration form.

What is MISTA?

MISTA is the professional development component for a school improvement process that can result in accreditation through Performance-Based Accreditation (PBA) granted by Montana's Board of Public Education and/or accreditation through the School Improvement Process (SIP) granted by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC). MISTA represents a collaborative effort of several educational organizations to provide professional development, as well as the collaboration among schools to facilitate and monitor these accreditation pro-cesses.

MISTA assists schools through the steps of a continuous program improvement process using materials based on Onward to Excellence (OTE) of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). MISTA organizes training, practice, and facilitation over a two-year period in the following steps:

1. Developing a student/community profile;
2. Identifying beliefs and developing a school mission statement and goals;
3. Identifying desired learner results;
4. Analyzing instructional and organizational effectiveness;
5. Developing and implementing a school improvement plan; and
6. Monitoring through response team visits.

Response Teams

MISTA schools have discovered that visiting other schools and hosting visits from peers provide valuable feedback in the school improvement process. The term "critical friends" is often used to describe the role of "Response Teams." The teams respond to questions generated by school staff and provide constructive criticism. They act as friends in that they take the time to understand the school's context, consider the school's perspectives, ask provocative questions, and take the best interests of the school and its learners to heart.

On-site visits important for accreditation process

Before the Board of Public Education can grant Performance-Based Accreditation, a school must host at least one on-site visitation. The Office of Public Instruction and

NASC recommend that schools host three visits: two interim visits and one accreditation visit before being granted accreditation under the SIP.

Regardless of the method of accreditation, MISTA schools have found that on-site visits are extremely valuable, both for the visitors and the host school. Schools that have completed the series of MISTA workshops are currently hosting and/or planning visitations. Reports from those schools indicate that the visitations have been extremely beneficial to all participants.

BIG SKY 2000:Finding Our Place in the New Millennium

On April 13-16, the Montana Teachers of English Language Arts will host the National Council of Teachers of English Northwest Regional Conference at the Big Sky Ski Resort. With the interdisciplinary theme *Sense of Place* and a cast of nationally known speakers and outstanding workshop presenters from throughout the Northwest, this conference will provide inspirational and valuable professional development for elementary, English, history, science, art, and library/media teachers.

Big Sky 2000 agenda

The conference kick-off, at 2 p.m. Thursday, April 13, features Daniel Kemmis, Director of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West. After two sets of breakout sessions, author James Welch will speak at a Thursday evening banquet. In addition to a wide selection of workshops, authors Rick Bass, Mary Clearman Blew, Stephen Ambrose, and NCTE President Jerome Harste will speak on Friday. Poet/singer/satirist Greg Keeler will provide Friday evening entertainment. Saturday's workshops will be supplemented with speakers Kathy Egawa of NCTE, author Ivan Doig, cowboy poet Paul Zarayski, and entertainers Rob Quist and the Great Northern Band. Sunday morning will be packed with sessions, National Public Radio's Chrysti the Wordsmith, and a closing address, "The Greatest Generation's Greatest Gift," by Tom Brokaw.

Registration is $100 before March 1, 2000. Forms are available on the OPI website <*www.metnet.state.mt.us*> under conferences. For lodging, call 1-800-548-4486.

Science-Mathematics Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNWS)
Patricia B. Johnson, State Coordinator
406-444-2736
patjohnson@state.mt.us

The Science and Mathematics Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNWS) serves schools and education-related agencies in Montana, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington with catalytic support that will broaden the effect, accelerate the pace, and increase the effectiveness of regional improvements in science and mathematics education. SMCNWS is one of 10 Eisenhower regional consortia in the country.

Electronic Newsletter

SMCNWS is publishing an electronic newsletter about opportunities, contests, and news of interest to K-12 science and mathematics educators. If you want to receive it, please e-mail me with your name, phone number, and e-mail and postal addresses. I will use the postal addresses to update e-mail addresses, which can change frequently. Electronic submissions of interest to Montana math-science educators are welcome.

ENC Publications Available

The following publications may be ordered free of charge from the Eisenhower National Clearinghouse (ENC). Please send an e-mail message to *editor@enc.org* with your request or call 800-621-5785.

- ENC Focus: Integrating Technology in the Classroom
- ENC Focus: Inquiry and Problem Solving
- ENC Focus: A Magazine for Classroom Innovators- Innovative Curriculum Materials
- ENC Focus: Family Involvement in Education
- ENC Focus: Informal Education
- ENC Focus: Multicultural Approaches in Math and Science
- Ideas that Work: Mathematics Professional Development
- Ideas that Work: Science Professional Development

ENC Pathfinders-Starting Points for Web Research

ENC Pathfinders are lists of suggested web resources (with links)that serve as starting points for research. Each is organized around a specific topic or issue related to K-12 math and science education. The Pathfinders are easy to print and contain the full titles of the suggested web resources, complete web addresses, and contact information.

The ENC continues to develop additional Pathfinders; those currently available are:

- ✔ Higher Education Scholarships, Grants, and Fellowships
- ✔ Professional Development Grants
- ✔ Technology and Equipment Grants, and
- ✔ Technology Plans.

The ENC Pathfinders can be accessed from <*http://galileo.enc.org/~library/path/*>.

Adult Education& Family Literacy
Becky Bird, Specialist
444-4443
bbird@state.mt.us

2001-2002 RFPs in the mail

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for program years 2001-2002 were sent to schools and interested organizations in January 2000. Adult Education and Family Literacy funds can be used for programs addressing adult basic education, family literacy, and English as a Second Language. It is anticipated that approximately $1,120,000 in combined state and federal dollars will be available to allocate to Montana programs.

Literacy consortia

Montana has joined the Northwest Regional Literacy Resource Center (NWRLRC) as a consortia member. The consortium consists of Montana, Washington, Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska.

NWRLRC's mission is to "enable practitioners in the field of adult literacy, basic skills, and English as a Second Language to share the best resources of the region and the nation."

If you are interested in tapping into this resource for assistance with programs and professional development, contact the NWRLRC (tel: 206-587-4983; e-mail: *nwrlrc@literacynet.org*).

Traffic Education
David Huff, Director
444-4396
dhuff@state.mt.us

Approval to Teach TE

Attention all Traffic Education instructors whose teaching certificate expires in the year 2000. In order to continue teaching TE for 2000-2001 you must reapply to teach traffic education, as well as renew your teaching certificate.

This is true *even* for instructors who have an endorsement in Traffic Education. In addition to being endorsed or completing the proper coursework, traffic education instructors must also possess a current driving license and have a driving record free of repeated traffic collisions or violations.

Contact the traffic education office (444-4432) to begin the re-approval process.

MTEA/OPI conference dates

This year, the Montana Trafic Educators Association and the Office of Public Instruction will hold their annual conference in Lewistown at the Yogo Inn. The dates are April 16 -18, 2000.

MSU-Northern will offer one semester credit for this conference, or renewal units are available.

National American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) Conference

Montana will host the national driver education conference this year in Billings. Conference dates are July 30 through August 2, 2000, with a pre-conference scheduled for the prior week. MSU-Northern will offer credit for the conference and possibly the pre-conference. Renewal units will also be available. This is a great opportunity for Montana traffic educators who do not usually have the opportunity to attend national conferences.

Vehicle crashes claim most lives among youth aged 15-20

According to a newsletter published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Region VIII, vehicle crashes killed more youth aged 15-20 than any other cause in 1997.

Below, in rank order, are the six leading causes of death in that age group and the number of fatalities ascribed to each in 1997.

1. Motor vehicle crashes — 6,232 or 33 percent of all deaths
2. Homicide — 4,159 or 22 percent of all deaths
3. Suicide — 2,395 or 13 percent of all deaths
4. Other (falls, drowning, etc.) — 1,608 or 9 percent of all deaths
5. Cancer — 867 or .05 percent of all deaths
6. Heart Disease — 511 or .03 percent of all deaths

Team Nutrition Training Program
Katie Bark, R.D., Coordinator
994-5641
uhdkb@montana.edu

When a school district enters into an agreement with the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) to offer the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs, they agree to follow USDA rules and regulations and serve balanced, nutritious meals. This dispatch article reviews the policies pertinent to the sale of competitive foods and foods of minimal nutritional value in the school. It also offers some suggestions for fostering healthful food choices in children.

Competitive foods

"Competitive foods" are foods sold to students in food service areas in competition with the National School Lunch or School Breakfast programs during breakfast and lunch periods. USDA rules stipulate that competitive foods may, at the discretion of the School Food Authority (SFA), be sold in food service areas during the meal period *only if all of the income from the sale of these foods accrues to the benefit of the non-profit school food service, the school, or school-approved student organizations*. SFAs may, at their own discretion, impose additional restrictions on the sale of and income from all foods sold at any time.

Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value

USDA rules also prohibit the sale of foods that do not meet USDA's

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

minimal nutritional requirements in food service areas during meal periods.

These "foods of minimal nutritional value" include artificially sweetened foods that provide less than 5 percent per serving of the United States Reference Daily Intakes (US RDI) for protein, vitamins A and C, niacin, riboflavin, calcium, and iron. Foods that are not artificially sweetened fall into this category if they provide less than 5 percent of the US RDI for those nutrients per 100 calories and per serving. Pop or soft drinks, water ices or popsicles, chewing gum, and certain candies – hard candy, jellies, marshmallow candies, licorice, spun candy, and candy coated popcorn – are some common foods of minimal nutritional value.

School meals programs

Currently, schools can choose to participate in various meals programs:

- *The National School Lunch Program* was instituted in 1946 to "safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food." The program's basic objectives remain the same today.
- *The School Breakfast Program*, started in 1966, offers children a meal at the start of the school day to help them be ready to learn.
- *USDA's Team Nutrition Program*, initiated in 1996, helps schools improve children's lifelong eating and physical activity habits through nutrition education.
- *After school Snack, Summer Food Service, Special Milk, and Kindergarten Milk Programs* provide nourishment to children throughout the school year and summer months.

School cafeteria, a nutrition education center

Through school meals programs and a la carte offerings, students should always have access to healthful food choices. In this way, the cafeteria can reinforce nutrition principles introduced in the classroom, and students can learn to eat and enjoy tasty, healthy foods.

The importance of this becomes increasingly apparent as more is learned about the relationship between individuals' long-term health and their eating habits. The following statistics indicate that children's nutritional status and eating habits can stand improvement.

- Childhood obesity rates are at an all-time high.
- Less than 1 percent of children meet the guidelines of the Food Guide Pyramid when making food choices.
- Over 40 percent of an average child's total daily calories are coming from fat and sugar.

Schools should think twice about either selling or allowing nutritionally inadequate foods to be sold during meal periods. The rationale that "some students will go off campus to buy low nutrition foods, so the school may as well profit from it" does not justify subverting the school's meals program. Local policy decisions concerning competitive food sales will show whether the school's priority lies with encouraging good eating habits or potentially profiting from the sale of non-nutritional foods.

Nutrition integrity

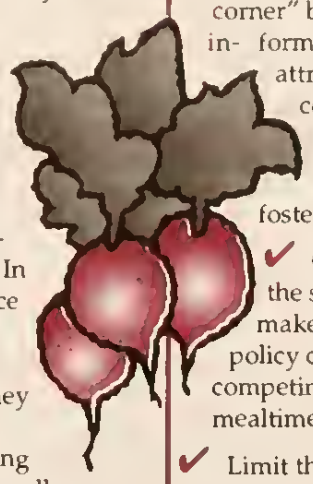
To help children learn lifelong healthy eating habits, schools should try to send students a nutritional message that is consistent. This means evaluating *all* of the foods available for children in the *entire* school building, not just the cafeteria at mealtimes. The American School Food Service Association (ASFSA) encourages schools to develop "nutrition integrity" — making sure that all the foods available to students comply with recommended dietary allowances and guidelines and contribute to the development of lifelong healthy eating habits when consumed.

The growing number of exclusive beverage contracts between schools and soft drink companies mounts a potential threat to nutrition integrity. What nutrition messages do students receive when soft drink machines are easily accessible in the hallways, gymnasiums and student common areas? What impact will the beverage habits that students established in their childhood and adolescent years have on their future health?

Dietary surveys find that teens — both boys and girls — are not consuming half of their calcium needs in these crucial bone-building years. Current studies reflect that soft drinks have displaced milk as the beverage of teenagers, explaining their low calcium intake and, in part, the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity.

Schoolwide environment

In short, the issues of competitive foods and the school's role in influencing children's eating habits are complicated and controversial. Creating a school environment that truly fosters and models healthy eating behaviors cannot be left to the school food service department alone; it needs to be a school-wide effort. In addition, school administration and food service personnel need to examine the impact of the foods and beverages offered throughout the school and the nutrition education messages they send students.



Any policy and procedural changes concerning these issues will require input and support from all members of the education team: school administrators, board members, school food service managers, staff, parents, community, and — most importantly — the students themselves.

The sidebar on the right contains some tips on how your school can promote healthy food and beverage habits and maintain nutrition integrity.

To learn more

For more information on the sale of competitive foods or further clarification on this topic, please contact the Montana Team Nutrition Program at (994-5641) or OPI's School Foods Unit at (444-2501).

Eisenhower Professional Development
Christine Provance, Specialist
444-4436
cprovance@state.mt.us

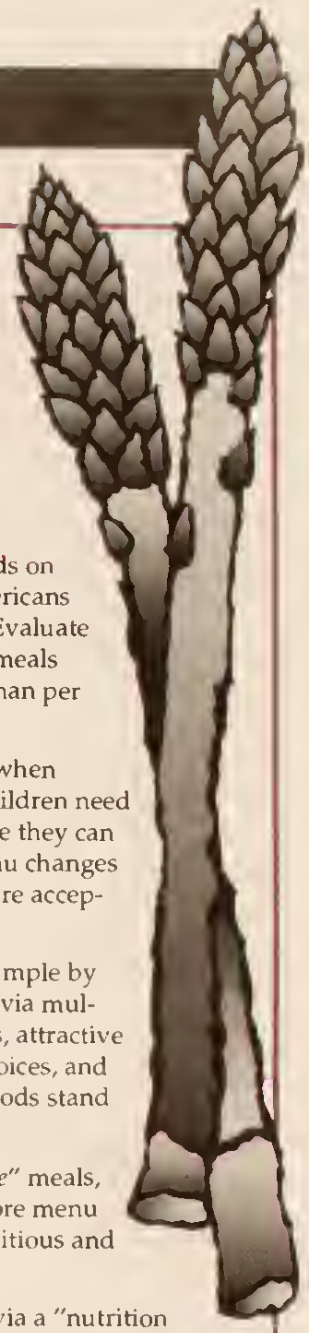
Capitalizing on teacher leadership

Today, educators face the challenging task of implementing many school reform initiatives. For Montana educators, the newly revised content and performance standards are their major focus of school reform. Teacher leaders, expert teachers who understand the issues surrounding standards-based instruction, can assist their peers in implementing the standards and helping all students to reach the high standards.

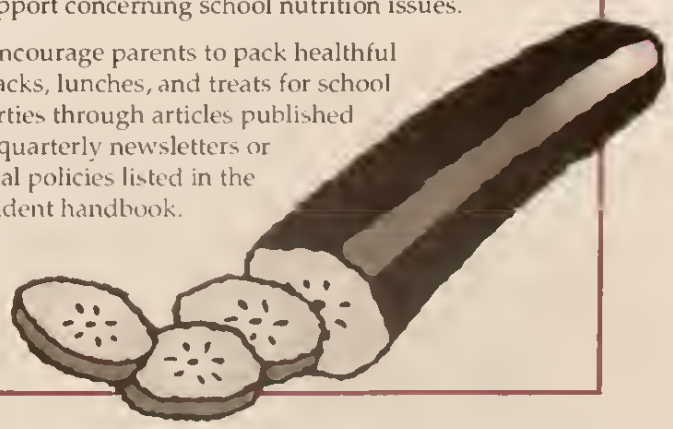
Especially in this time of tight resources, teacher leaders are a key ingredient that must not be overlooked. Developing a cadre of new teacher leaders and supporting the excellent work of our current teacher leaders are

(Continued on page 11)

What schools can do to foster healthy food habits in students



- ✔ Base menu-planning standards on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid. Evaluate the nutritional value of school meals over a five-day period, rather than per single meal or food item.
- ✔ Consider student preferences when planning menus. Obviously, children need to be willing to eat a food before they can benefit from it. As a result, menu changes may need to be gradual to ensure acceptance.
- ✔ Make the cafeteria a good example by merchandising healthful foods via multiple menu choices. Use baskets, attractive arrangements, colorful food choices, and garnishes to make nutritious foods stand out.
- ✔ Offer "reimbursable *a la carte*" meals, giving all students access to more menu choices while encouraging nutritious and balanced meals.
- ✔ Increase nutrition awareness via a "nutrition corner" bulletin board display in the cafeteria with information on "hot" nutrition topics. Display attractive posters to depict important nutrition concepts geared to interest students.
- ✔ Make sure any foods offered in addition to meals give optimal nutrition quality and foster healthful eating habits.
- ✔ Consider imposing additional restrictions on the sale of competitive foods to help students make nutritious foods choices. For example, a policy can be implemented to disallow the sale of competing foods for 30 minutes both before and after mealtimes.
- ✔ Limit the availability of foods with minimal nutritional value at school-sponsored events during mealtimes.
- ✔ Ensure that healthful food choices are always available, especially if non-nutritional food items are also being sold. A good practice is to offer the "healthy" food items at a lower cost than "junk" food items to help persuade students to make the better food choices.
- ✔ Implement school policies that restrict giving foods of minimal nutritional value out to students as rewards.
- ✔ Incorporate nutrition education as an integral part of the curriculum, from preschool to grade 12.
- ✔ Connect students to fun, interactive Web sites on nutrition and health topics in computer labs and classroom computers.
- ✔ Form a Nutrition Action Team of school food service personnel, school administrators, staff, students and parents that will help implement a team approach for decision making and policy development, maintain good communication, and gain support concerning school nutrition issues.
- ✔ Encourage parents to pack healthful snacks, lunches, and treats for school parties through articles published in quarterly newsletters or local policies listed in the student handbook.



(Continued from page 10)

investments worth considering in the quest to effectively implement our vision of standards-based instruction.

School reform and teacher learning are inseparable. However, it is known that many professional development models fall short of supporting teachers in their efforts to change (1999 Eisenhower Survey Results). A December retreat, held to honor the 1999 Montana Presidential Awardees for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, provided insights into teacher leadership. One of the purposes of this retreat was to identify the student benefits of teacher leadership and outline the barriers teachers face when taking a leadership role. To this end, a panel of six guests and the ten 1999 Presidential Awardees spent the first morning of the retreat discussing teacher leadership.

Following is a list of the awardees and the panelists who attended the retreat:

AWARDEES: *Valerie Sampson*, Kalispell; *Charla Bunker*, Great Falls; *Charles Deisher*, Terry; *Cliff Bara*, Troy; *Bonnie Hawthorne*, Helena; *Rolland Karlin*, Big Timber; *Mary Jo Gardner*, Kalispell; *John Miller*, Helena; *Wendy Pierce*, Bozeman; *Jeanne Frank*, Missoula.

PANELISTS: *Ray Kuntz*, CEO, Watkins Shepard Trucking; *Jean Curtiss*, Past President, Montana Parent Teacher Association; *Eric Feaver*, President, Montana Education Association; *Clarice Walters*, Past President, American Association of University Women; *Bob Vogel*, Chairman, Montana School Boards Association; *Susan Bjerke*, Architect, Bjerke Architects.

> **"These teachers listen to the needs of students, colleagues, and the community. They provide for the youth in their community both mentally and emotionally. They are people that impact the entire school because they are role models for both students and other teachers."**
>
> **—Clarice Walters, Past President , American Assn. of University Women**

Leadership defined

The forum defined teacher leadership as "Teachers leading within and outside of the classroom, influencing the profession of education by advocating and modeling continuous learning in the areas of content and pedagogy, and contributing to the larger community of leaders through a willingness to take the lead when necessary."

Student-centered vision of leadership

"Teachers are the first adults who see you as an individual" stated Susan Bjerke. "Children thrive in an environment of acceptance. A good teacher knows you for who you are. There is a sense of selflessness there. Teachers want someone else to succeed...their students. That selflessness describes a teacher leader."

"The main goal of the teacher leaders here today is to make a difference with students," agreed Rolland Karlin. "Not just our students, but ALL students outside the classroom. We do this through training and mentoring teachers in the use of best practices in our content area, motivating students through outside activities, and modeling lifelong learning."

This student-centered vision of leadership is echoed in the Corwin Press Publication *Awakening the Sleeping Giant* (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). "When teachers see themselves as leaders, they discover the potential to influence student learning through their own actions. This is the reason most of us became educators in the first place...to make a difference with our students."

Clarice Walters added these thoughts to the description of a teacher leader. "These teachers listen to the needs of students, colleagues, and the community. They provide for the youth in their community both mentally and emotionally. They are people that impact the entire school because they are role models for both students and other teachers."

"We need teacher leaders because they are not satisfied with status quo," concluded Jean Curtiss. "They have busted the biases in the mathematics and science professions. They will not accept illiteracy in any field and they monitor their own profession on these issues. These are people who do not accept mediocrity."

Barriers and bridges

With all of the positive contributions strong teacher leaders can make in the lives of children, the business-oriented panel members were surprised to hear of the barriers that teachers face in becoming leaders. Lack of support, isolation and time were named as primary reasons teachers chose not to lead and leaders may choose to leave the teaching profession.

Research in school reform continues to report promising outcomes as teacher leaders have more opportunity to influence. M.W. MacLaughlin (1995) found that the single most important variable in predicting high achievement among students is whether or not teachers are participating in some form of learning community. In order to deal with the problems of isolation and support, the teacher leaders on the forum agreed that, "We are all partners in the change process. Working collaboratively with our peers allows us to have a positive influence on change."

"It is the teacher leader's ability to understand other people's views and to motivate them that is critical" said Ray Kuntz on the topic of leaders impacting other teachers. "Leaders know how to make everyone feel validated and important."

Being a part of a school or district decision-making process will benefit teacher leaders by helping them see how their efforts contribute to the overall success of students. It will benefit districts because of the content and pedagogical expertise these leaders hold. Districts can capitalize on this expertise by hiring teacher leaders as district trainers and encouraging them to participate in or chair school improvement committees. Seeking their consultation throughout the data analysis and planning process can greatly benefit districts and leaders.

> **"We need teacher leaders because they are not satisfied with status quo. They have busted the biases in the mathematics and science professions. They will not accept illiteracy in any field and they monitor their own profession on these issues. These are people who do not accept mediocrity."**
>
> **—Jean Curtiss, Past President, MT Parent Teacher Assn.**

Time for teachers

"Teacher leaders need to get out of their classrooms. An environment that isolates teachers is not an environment that will benefit from teacher leadership," commented Eric Feaver, referring to the critical issue of time. The panel agreed and added, "Time to coach others and time to be coached is a critical need. Time to travel outside of the local area to find out what works out there and to experience the encouragement of other risk takers forging new ground in education is a must."

It will be a challenge to restructure the school day so teacher leaders will have time to share their expertise locally. Just as challenging will be balancing the demands of tight professional development budgets so they can build upon their existing knowledge base. Ways to develop a broader base of teacher leaders and capitalize on the expertise of current teacher leadership should be a part of the discussions of all school reform committees. Some hard decisions will need to be made.

Facilitation Strategies

"Fear of opposition to their ideas and of being criticized are real to teachers who want to maintain positive relationships... committed teacher leaders, however, are tenacious and do whatever it takes to make things better for their students. Professional reading, coaching, study groups, networks, and delegated assignments at school are a few of the (professional) development strategies that could overcome this problem." (Katzenmeyer and Mol[illegible])

"Districts could provide teacher leaders with the training necessary to become change agents," added the teacher leader forum. "Training in facilitation strategies, conflict resolution, the change process and school improvement will empower teacher leaders to positively influence the system being reformed."

Touching the Future

Teacher leaders have a passionate commitment to the advancement of the educational profession. "These are the risk takers," reflected Eric Feaver. "They do not view their leadership in a casual manner. They are the teachers out in front...always up-to-date on their content knowledge base...always monitoring themselves to make sure they are using the teaching strategies that help their students succeed."

Bob Vogel reminded us of the quote from Christa McAuliffe, "I touch the future, I teach." He added, "Kids are not just our social future, but our economic and political future as well. They need strong leadership models."

A wealth of untapped resources exists in our current teacher leadership. Identifying and encouraging all teachers to be leaders can expand those resources. However, as *Awakening the Sleeping Giant* continually reminds us, "Leadership development cannot be left to happenstance... many stakeholders must assume responsibility for systematically providing staff development experiences that help teachers to assume meaningful leadership roles in the reform of schools. Schools will improve when individual teachers change their behavior, attitudes, and beliefs to take on new leadership roles." ■

Bulletin Board

Listings in the Bulletin Board do not necessarily imply endorsement by the Office of Public Instruction.

Opportunities for students

U-DOC Summer Program

The U-DOC Summer High School Program is a six-week course designed to help students into medical school and other health care professions. Participants receive a pre-med curriculum overview, communications and study skills assistance, and exposure to clinical medicine through rotations with health providers. U-DOC is offered at MSU–Bozeman, the site of Montana's only medical school, part of the regional WAMI program, in association with the University of Washington.

Participants receive full scholarships, covering all program costs. U-DOC is open to students who have completed their sophomore, junior, or senior year of high school as of June 2000. Students who meet any of the following criteria are particularly encouraged to apply: under-represented minorities; economically disadvantaged; from a rural area; and first generation in the family to be college bound.

The application deadline is March 24, 2000. To find out more or download an application, visit <*http://healthinfo.montana.edu/U-DOC/default.html*>. Contact Clara Pincus, program director (tel: 994-6001).

Veterans Day 2000 poster contest

The Montana State Veterans Affairs Division invites high school students to enter the 2000 National Poster Contest and salute America's veterans with art.

Montana's winning artwork will be selected this spring and sent to Washington, DC to compete nationally. Deadline for submission is March 15, 2000. Contest details can be obtained from local school officials, the Montana Veterans Affairs Division, and <*http://www.va.gov/pubaff/vetsday/index.htm*>. For more information, contact Jim Jacobsen (tel: 841-3740; e-mail: *jjacobsen@state.mt.us*).

Montana Economics Challenge

The Helena Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, along with the Montana Council on Economic Education (MCEE), are sponsoring the fifth annual Montana Economics Challenge on Wednesday, April 5, 2000 at Carroll College in Helena.

High school teachers of social studies, government, economics, business, and enrichment programs, along with their students, are invited to assemble teams to compete in the challenging array of tests of economic concepts, issues, and reasoning. Teams are comprised of a coach and three to five students who compete individually and as a team. The winning team will be invited to compete in the Ninth District Federal Reserve Economics Challenge Playoffs, held at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis on Monday, May 22. To learn more, contact Errolyn Lantz (tel: 447-3803; e-mail: *errolyn.lantz@mpls.frb.org*).

Crystal Growing Contest

The Montana Section of the American Chemical Society is sponsoring a *Crystal Growing Contest* for Montana high school students in grades 9-12. Crystals will be judged on their size, clarity, symmetry, and general appearance at the Spring 2000 Montana Academy of Science Meeting to be held in Missoula.

Entry forms and additional details on the contest, including sources on how to grow crystals can be found at <*http://www.mtech.edu/chem/ACS/2000_Crystal.htm*>. Entry forms are also available from Dr. Ken Emerson (tel: 587-0203; e-mail: *Kemerson@montana.edu*) or Dr. Doug Coe (tel: 496-4207; e-mail: *dcoe@mtech.edu*).

Entry forms should be returned to either Emerson or Coe by March 15, 2000. Call or e-mail them for their mailing addresses.

CALENDAR

February

2- 3: MISTA Professional Development Workshop: "Profiling & Direction Setting," Wolf Point— Jan Clinard, 444-3714, *jclinard@state.mt.us*

2- 4: Montana Assoc. of Elementary and Middle School Principals (MAEMSP) Annual Convention, Missoula — MAEMSP, 442-2510, *samjs@mt.net*

8- 10: School to Work Institute, Billings Trade Center — Cathy Yetter, 444-6570, *cyetter@oche.montana.edu*

9: Montana State Library Commission Meeting, Helena, Montana State Library Conference Room — Amanda Broadwater, 444-3384

11: Montana Library Association Board Meeting, Bozeman Public Library — Bruce Newell, 444-9816 , *bnewell@state.mt.us*

22- 23: MISTA Professional Development Workshop: "Profiling & Direction Setting Great Falls — Jan Clinard, 444-3714, *jclinard@state.mt.us*

25- 26: Montana Library Association's Offline 2000 Retreat, Great Falls — Kathy Mora, 453-0349, *kathy@orion.mtgr.mtlib.org* or Maggie Farrell, 994-6474, *farrell@mt.edu*

March

2- 3: Mental Health Assoc. of Great Falls Northwest Regional Conference, Great Falls — Cindy Dolan, 727-3528 or Darlene Meddock, 761-6680;

2-4: Family Literacy Conference, Helena — Joan Morris, 444-3083 , *jmorris@state.mt.us*

3- 4: Montana Aviation Conference, Billings — Jeanne MacPherson, 444-2506, *jemacpherson@state.mt.us*

3- 6: American Assoc. of School Administrators Conference, San Francisco, CA — *http://www.aasa.org*

15-18: National Congress on Aviation and Space Education, San Diego, CA — Civil Air Patrol Nat'l Headquarters, 334-953-5095, *ncase@capnhq.gov*

18-21: National Assoc. of Elementary School Principals Meeting, New Orleans — *http://www.naesp.org*

23-24: Board of Public Education Meeting, Havre — Heidi Redman, 444-0302, *hredman@bpe.montana.edu*

23-25: Family, Career & Community Leaders of America State Leadership Conference, Billings — Laurie Stelter, 444-2059, *lstelter@state.mt.us*

25- 26 : Broad Valleys Library Federation Meeting, Chico Hot Springs — Debbie Schlesinger, 447-1690 x 17, *dschlesi@mtlib.org*

25- 27: ASCD Annual Conference & Exhibit Show, New Orleans — Assoc. for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 800-933-ASCD, *http://www.ascd.org*

April

6- 8 : Association of Gifted and Talented Educators (AGATE) Conference, Billings — Stephanie Smith, 247-3898

7: Tamarack Library Federation Meeting, Kalispell — Carol Wayland-Smith, 293-2778, *cwayland @libby.org*

10-12: SkillsUSA-VICA State Conference, Havre MSU–Northern — David Strong, 444-4452 , *dstrong@state.mt.us*

9- 12: Joint NCATE/State Teacher Education Program Review, UM–Missoula — Don Freshour, OPI, 444-2577, dfreshour@state.mt.us

9- 12: Montana Indian Education Assoc. (MIEA) Conference, Great Falls — Theodora Weatherwax, tel: 338-2725, fax: 338-2607

12: Montana State Library Commission Meeting, Helena — Amanda Broadwater, 444-3384

13- 16: Big Sky 2000: Finding Our Place in the New Millennium, Big Sky, Montana — Jan Clinard, 444-3714, *jclinard@state.mt.us*

16- 18: Montana Traffic Education Conference, Lewistown — Jim Carroll, 278-2385 or 278-7856

26- 29 : Montana Library Association Conference, Billings — Bill Kehler, 657-1086, *kehlerb@rocky.edu* or Lyn McKinney, 655-3131, *Mckinneyl@billings.k12.mt.us*

30- May 5 : International Reading Association Conference, Indianapolis, IN — June Atkins, 444-3664, *jatkins@state.mt.us* or Online registration: *http://www.reading.org*

Florence-Carlton

Continued from page 4

a multimedia presentation for their class. Throughout the whole process the technology trainer bridges the gap from curriculum, to classroom while enhancing existing teacher skills.

At FCS the students and their teachers learn new computer technology skills during each computer lab session. Before each lab session the technology trainer reviews the curriculum, consults with the classroom teacher, and develops a lesson plan.

The FCS approach of using a technology-integrated curriculum together with a technology trainer who teaches and consults has created a very successful program.

Teacher comments

"Every time we have computer lab I learn something new!"

"There is consistency in what my kids are learning at each grade level."

"I have increased my personal computer skills while learning with the kids."

In conclusion

Computer technology is rapidly changing and there is no point at which one can say, "training is complete."

Along with upgrading hardware and computer applications, all aspects of the technology program must be continually reviewed and revised to provide the best technology instruction possible to our children. ■

— Gordon Booth, Florence-Carlton School Technology Trainer

Certification

Continued from page 2

Some of the fine print

Interns must hold Montana teacher certification, except for the specialist category of school counselor. The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) maintains completed contracts, notifies school accreditation of agreements, and keeps the BPE informed. Candidates for internships during the 2000-2001 school year should arrange their programs by Summer 2000.

Learning more

Interested teachers or district officials should contact the program coordinators on the campus of their choice. If interested in an administrative internship, contact Boyd Dressler (994-1819) at MSU–Bozeman or Bill McCaw (243-5395) at UM–Missoula. Counselling internship coordinators are: Korinne Tande (265-3745) at MSU–Northern; Mark Nelson (994-3810) at MSU-Bozeman; Cathy Jenni (243-2608) or Rita Sommers-Flanagan (243-5252) at UM–Missoula; and James Nowlin (657-2089) or Daniel Yazak (657-2349) at MSU–Billings.

To learn more call Marilyn Roberts (444-3150) or Don Freshour (444-2577) at OPI. ■

— Don Freshour, OPI Director of Certification and Licensure

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